A NOTE FROM THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

As the pandemic recedes, we should celebrate our success in continuing to fulfill UBC’s research and training mandate through the difficult times we have endured. In our various ways we also continued to provide first-class eye care to British Columbians in need. All this calls for heartfelt congratulations and a huge ‘thank you’ to all. It is also high time we had a Departmental newsletter, not only to share in the happiness of our return to relative normality but also to inform everyone of the many things that happen in the Department, to share updates and advise of changes.

Improved transparency is something many had called for in the Departmental retreat which we held last fall, and this is a start. Please feel free to contribute items for inclusion in this newsletter which, we hope to produce every 2 months.

Hopefully we will soon return to in-person Grand Rounds and meetings, though Zoom should remain an option for some time. I look forward to seeing many of you there!

With best wishes,

Christopher Lyons
RESEARCH

NEW PROJECTS

Dr. Christopher Shaw’s Lab:
- Currently working on 3 different projects: Finding peripheral biomarkers in sporadic patients and an in vivo environmental model of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) for earlier disease detection; investigating enhancer regulatory elements as novel sporadic ALS risk factors and describing the role of the nuclear pore complex in ALS; and screening the effects of novel immune modulating agents in vitro. These projects are supported by Neurodegenerative Disease Research Inc.

INCOMING RESEARCH FELLOWS/STUDENTS

New Postdoctoral Fellows (Dr. Joanne Matsubara’s Lab)
- Dr. Gideon Obasanmi received his PhD in 2017 from Queens University, Belfast Northern Ireland in the field of Vascular Medicine and Ocular Immunology.
- Dr. Printha Wijesinghe received her PhD in 2020 from University of Maastricht, Netherlands in the field of Translational Neurosciences.
- Dr. Erika Tian received her MD degree in 2012 from Zhongshan School of Medicine, and her MSc degree in 2020 in Neurosciences, UBC.

New Graduate Students (Dr. Joanne Matsubara’s Lab)
- Manjosh Uppal is in the Experimental Medicine Graduate Program (Recipient of a CIHR Graduate Student Fellowship).
- Se Na Youn is in the Cell and Development Graduate Program (Start: Sept 2021).

RESEARCH AWARDS

Dr. Ipek Oruc’s Summer Student Awards:
- Anastasia Stolzenberg: UBC FOM SSRP award
  - Project Title: “Daily face exposure of adults with and without autism spectrum disorder (ASD)”
- Nadia Tarazi: NSERC USRA award
  - Project title: “Tuning of face perception with a racially heterogeneous face-diet”
- Tienlan Sun: Won 1st Place in Translational Medical Sciences as part of Team-Canada at Regeneron ISEF 2021.
  - Project title: “TeleAEye: Low-Cost Automated Eye Disease Diagnosis Using a Novel Smartphone Fundus Camera With AI”

Dr. Joanne Matsubara’s Summer Student Awards:
- Miranda Tsuyuki received an NSERC USRA for 2021 Summer Semester.
- Grace Hu received a 2021 Multidisciplinary Research Program in Medicine to work with Drs. Matsubara and M.J. Ju for the Summer Semester.
- Jacob Ng received a 2021 Multidisciplinary Research Program in Medicine to work with Drs. Matsubara and M.J. Ju for the Summer Semester.

RESEARCH GRANTS AWARDED

Dr. Joanne Matsubara’s Lab
NIH R01- “Reversing Contractility in Epiretinal Membranes of PVR” (with Dr. Tim Blenkonsop, Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai NYC)
NIH R01- “Validation of Retinal Abeta as a Potential Biomarker of Alzheimer’s Disease” (with Dr. Wellington Pham, Vanderbilt University School of Medicine)
MITACS- “Evaluation of Terminal Complement Cascade Inhibitors using in vitro and in vivo Models of AMD and Alzheimer’s Disease (in partnership with Paragon Ventures)
UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING

Thank you to everyone who has volunteered their time to teach the undergraduate students of UBC. The top five teachers with the most hours of 2021 so far are:

- Jane Gardiner
- Hugo Sutton
- Kulbir Gill
- Christopher Lyons
- Paul Mackenzie

A motion was brought forward and passed at our last UBC Faculty meeting (June 25, 2021). The expectation is that all clinical faculty will teach a minimum of 6 full days in an academic year (12 half day sessions). There are many faculty who exceed this greatly, but if we can have a minimum commitment from all faculty, it will be easier to fill student schedules. As a group, we have decided the importance of ophthalmologists, rather than optometrists, teaching our medical students. We hope that you will all step forward and fulfill your undergraduate teaching requirement. If you have certain days or times which will work for you to teach, please let Selina Lau know (selina.lau@vch.ca). Together we can fulfill our role in the Faculty of Medicine to provide an excellent experience for our students and prepare them for their careers ahead.

FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM

INCOMING 2021 FELLOWS

Please welcome our incoming 2021 UBC Ophthalmology Fellows who will be with us for the next year.

Niraj Mandal (United Kingdom)- Cornea
Alannah Walsh (Australia)- Glaucoma
Moritz Feil (Switzerland)- Neuro-ophthalmology
Abdul-Rahem Abu Shanab (Palestine)- Pediatrics
Treasa Murphy (Ireland)- Pediatrics
Geoffrey Law (Canada)- Oculoplastics
Bryan McKay (Canada)- Retina
Tuan Tran (Australia)- Retina
Irfan Kherani (Canada)- Vision Rehabilitation
Myra Butler (Canada)- Vision Rehabilitation

“FOR THE THINGS WE HAVE TO LEARN BEFORE WE CAN DO THEM, WE LEARN BY DOING THEM.”
— ARISTOTLE
Welcome to the 2021 – 2022 Academic Year!

As the circle of education and training moves forward, we would like to, once again, extend sincere congratulations to Dr. Myra Butler, Dr. Geoffrey Law & Dr. Wendy Ming on their successful graduation!

Myra is on her way to a fellowship in Vision Rehabilitation at UBC.

Geoff will be starting his fellowship in Orbit/Oculoplastics at UBC.

Wendy will be doing an Orbit/Oculoplastics fellowship at the University of Calgary.

Congratulations also to the 2021 Teaching Awardees: Dr. Kaivon Vaezi (clinical teaching), Dr. Stuart Smith (surgical teaching) and Dr. Duncan Anderson was awarded the first Departmental Resident Mentorship Award. Well deserved to each! We recognize that it takes the work of a dedicated community to train and graduate exceptional residents. On behalf of the residents and RTC, we would like to thank each of you sincerely for your commitment and contributions over this past year.

In this upcoming academic year, look for updated stage- and rotation-specific goals & objectives, revamped One45 forms and ongoing conversations around ways to create and enhance a supportive and collaborative learning environment.

The residency training program continues to work hard toward addressing accreditation concerns. To help support our program, Paola Martens joined our team in April 2021. She is a Special Projects Administrator, with experience in supporting programs in transition. In addition, to improve direct communication, RTC minutes are now being outlined and distributed at UBC, SPH and VA staff meetings. Dr. Sheldon, Dr. Noureddin & Dr. Nathoo are always available to receive comments, concerns, and feedback!

We would also like to welcome our incoming PGY2 residents: Dr. Heidi Britton, Dr. Anastasia Faggioni & Dr. Carter Lim.

Dr. Heidi Britton completed her BSc (Biochemistry) and MD at UBC. She enjoys back-country skiing and her best Rubix cube speed is 42 seconds!

Dr. Anastasia Faggioni grew up in Sudbury, Ontario and attended the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. She enjoys calligraphy and travel, particularly to Italy where she has extended family.

Raised in North Vancouver, Dr. Carter Lim completed his BSc (Western) & MD (Ottawa). He enjoys photography and is a supporter of the Liverpool Football Club!

Upcoming Resident, Program & Departmental Events:
August 20th, 2021: Next RTC Committee Meeting
August 27, 2021: Next UBC Faculty Meeting
Outdoor Summer Gathering and Summer BBQ. Details pending.

Newsletter submissions: jacqui.moolenbeek@vch.ca